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NEW KNOWLEDGE OF HOME ECONOMICS

A radio talk by Dr. Louise Stanley, Chief, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through WRC and 39 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, December 11, 1930.

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It is hard in the time allotted to me to pick out the high lights or the most important accomplishments of our bureau for the last year. Some of the work which really does not headline so well may be of greatest practical importance - for example, information on food composition is necessary for planning of menus and diet for disease. Much of this does not get to you, since these basic data are used as a basis for the menus and diets we send you, but back behind the scenes it is important and last year we did publish new summary tables on the composition of vegetables, which will be helpful in showing the place of these in the diet.

Vitamins are always interesting. We did not discover a new one but we did add to our knowledge of one of the less well-known ones which prevents pellagra, a disease all too prevalent in the South. For the last two years, you will find from our report, we have been working with a group of families in South Carolina that were suffering from this disease. Last year we added to their diet foods containing this pellagra-preventing vitamin. The studies have shown that it is possible to cut down the incidence of this disease quite markedly if not entirely prevent it by very simple changes in the food. In order to follow this up we are continuing the study of some of the cheap and simple foods available in the South, to determine which of these may be suggested as a source of this important food constituent.

Then, over in our laboratory kitchens we tested for quality, not only meats of all sorts, but vegetables. They boiled and baked and fried potato seedlings to determine which showed the best quality in cooking. The studies were most interesting. (Fried potatoes are not as indigestible as we used to think they were.) These studies showed that if you want to fry potatoes you should not store them at too low a temperature, or if they have been stored at a low temperature you must warm them up a bit before frying - that is if you want a nice light brown color and crisp texture. Potatoes stored below 60 degrees do not fry well without this preliminary storage period of something like two weeks at a higher temperature.

As a by-product of these studies, and as a direct result of others, many tested recipes, some new and some old, were published last year in various forms. Some of these came to you over the radio. All that passed the test are now being assembled in a new edition of the radio cookbook.

And then in our refrigeration laboratory you will find reported some interesting studies on refrigeration of meat. Meat should be kept just as cold as milk in the refrigerator. It is not so interesting to talk about millions of bacteria but I wish I might show you the pictures which have been magnified to show how far into the meat these bacteria get when the meat has been held at different temperatures for different periods of time. Also, a very practical suggestion, if you cover your meat loosely instead of tightly fewer bacteria develop.

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Then, over in the Economics Division, they have continued the studies on standards of living in a more intensive way. Expense accounts were obtained from families of different sizes, living under different conditions. These were studied in detail and expenditures analyzed to find which had the best spending plans. These are to be published as suggestive budgets as an aid to you in working out your own. Ready-made budgets do not fit as well as ready-made clothes. They need more adjustment to family conditions. Dietary studies were continued with various groups and during last year two reports appeared giving the cost and amounts of food purchased for special groups. Probably the most important study of this section and one of the most important of the bureau was the study we made last year with farm families in South Carolina, referred to above, showing that the incidence of pellagra could be very much decreased with very slight modifications in the diet and with little increase in cost. A circular has been mimeographed making this information available to those who need it.

Then, the Economics Division has planned some charts as a result of their time studies, showing how the rural housewife spends her time. These are hanging on their walls and give us an increased appreciation of the economic contribution of the rural homemaker to the income of the family. Similar data were collected on the city housewife, and are now being analyzed.

In the Textile and Clothing Division they have studied wool, cotton, and children's clothes, and these mix together very well. For the outer garment, we have found a new cotton cloth which makes a very durable, rain-proof and wind-proof outside garment, warm if it is over a material of wool, so the combination is suggested for cold and rainy days. Then for the inside garments all kinds of designs in cotton that are washable and attractive were suggested, most of them so constructed that the youngster will not only enjoy them but be able to put them on and off him- or herself - mostly an advantage, but very occasionally a disadvantage, I must admit. Our information service reports a very great increase in the demand for this material. Almost three million were sent out last year in response to definite requests and in addition others were sold through the Superintendent of Documents. Perhaps some of you are counted in among those three million. I am not going to take time to list for you the new bulletins prepared last year, but if you are interested and would like to know more in detail what our bureau is doing I would suggest that you write for my report which was released November 27, and a list of the bulletins available.